

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5877

As of March 3, 2003

Title: An act relating to the learning assistance program.

Brief Description: Changing the learning assistance program.

Sponsors: Senators Johnson, McAuliffe, Kohl-Welles and Rasmussen; by request of Governor Locke.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Education: 3/5/03.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Staff: Heather Lewis-Lechner (786-7448)

Background: Washington's Learning Assistance Program (LAP) was created in statute in 1987. Funding for the program is considered part of basic education. The program is designed to enhance education opportunities for public school students in kindergarten through ninth grade who are deficient in basic skills in reading, mathematics, language arts and readiness skills and who are identified as needing additional services or support through the district's needs assessments. In 1999, budget provisions extended funding for the program to include tenth and eleventh grade students.

Under LAP, each school district that applies for state funds must conduct a needs assessment and develop a plan for the use of the funds. The program plan must include certain listed items and must be submitted to the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) for approval. The needs assessment must be updated at least biennially and is determined in consultation with an advisory committee.

Once a program is approved by OSPI, the school district is eligible to receive state funds that are made available for the purposes of such programs. Funds are distributed by OSPI in accordance with the biennial appropriations act. The funds are allocated to the school districts using a formula that includes both student achievement on norm-references tests and a poverty factor.

A non-exclusive list of services or activities which may be supported by an approved LAP is provided in statute and includes: instructional support staff, consultant teachers, in-service training for teachers or parents of participating students, special instructional programs, tutoring assistance, and counseling.

OSPI must monitor school district programs no less than once every three years to ensure that districts are meeting the requirements of the approved program.

Summary of Bill: The LAP is reorganized with the intent to assist districts in understanding the nature of their achievement gaps and to help guide them in providing the most effective and efficient practices in implementation of their program. The program's intent is to assist students in kindergarten through ninth grade who are not meeting the state achievement standards in the basic skills areas of reading, writing, mathematics and readiness skills. Students are identified by using the Washington Assessment of Student Learning and district basic skills assessments.

School districts must apply for LAP funds and must annually submit a program plan to OSPI for approval. A program plan must include certain listed elements. School districts that have achieved reading and mathematics goals as set by the Academic Achievement and Accountability Commission must have their program approved once the plan and activities submittal is complete. Districts that have not achieved the reading and mathematics goals must have their plans reviewed by OSPI for the purposes of receiving technical assistance in the final development of the plan. Districts that have not achieved the goals and that are in a state or federal program of school improvement shall have their plans and activities reviewed and approved in conjunction with the state or federal program school improvement program requirements.

Once a program is approved by OSPI, the school district is eligible to receive state funds that are available for the purposes of such programs. Funds are distributed by OSPI in accordance with the biennial appropriations act.

The services and activities that may be supported by an approved LAP are: extended learning time opportunities, professional development for staff, consultant teachers to assist teachers, tutoring support and outreach activities.

OSPI must monitor school district programs no less than once every four years to ensure that districts are meeting the requirements of the approved program.

The existing laws governing the program are repealed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 25, 2003.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.